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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LUANDA 000235

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM PDEM AO

SUBJECT: ANGOLA: UNITA BELIEVES SHOTS FIRED WERE AN ATTEMPT
ON SAMAKUVA,S LIFE

REF: 06 LUANDA 1297

Classified By: Amb. Cynthia Efird for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On March 2, shots were fired at the UNITA party headquarters in Camabatela, Kwanza Norte province while UNITA president Isaias Samakuva was in the building. UNITA representatives publicly announced to the media and privately to emboff that the shots fired were a direct threat to Samakuva's life, while the government insisted they were only a random weapon discharge on a Friday night. Using the attention generated by the incident, Samakuva has increased his criticism of the government, focusing on the lack of independence in the judiciary and the widespread insider business dealings of high ranking officials. Other UNITA leaders allege that the incident was a government attempt to intimidate UNITA in the lead-up to elections. Although investigations continue, it is likely that this event will remain an unsolved incident in Angolan pre-election lore, with each side interpreting it to its best political advantage. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) P/E Chief met with UNITA spokesperson Adalberto da Costa Junior on March 7, 2007 for UNITA,s readout of the events surrounding the shots fired in Camabatela, in Kwanza Norte province during the March 2 visit of UNITA president Isaias Samakuva.

UNITA,s View of Events:

¶3. (SBU) UNITA,s version of the events is as follows: As part of a tour of municipalities in Kwanza Norte province, Samakuva planned a March 2 visit to the small town of Camabatela, including an overnight stop. A UNITA advance team had arranged hotel reservations several days ahead of the trip, and had traveled to Camabatela in advance of Samakuva,s party. The hotel manager on March 2 told the advance team that he had been visited by the Police Investigations Division who told him not to allow UNITA to stay at the hotel, or hold any meetings there. The police returned on the afternoon of March 2 and reiterated the message, ordering the hotel manager to close the hotel which he then did, evicting the UNITA advance team from the premises.

¶4. (SBU) Earlier on March 2, da Costa said that Samakuva held a &positive meeting8 with the governor of Kwanza Norte in provincial capital of Ndalatando and then proceeded north for the 150 kilometer drive to Camabatela. In addition to the UNITA members in the traveling party, Samakuva was escorted by his standard detail from the Protocol Protection Unit (UPIP) which provides protection to Angolan VIPs and foreign dignitaries, as well as an additional detail of the provincial police. Arriving in Camabatela in the evening, Samakuva proceeded directly to the UNITA party headquarters where he was briefed on the circumstances surrounding the

change in venue. Some of the police detail were also present inside the building. About this time there was a power failure. Shortly thereafter, approximately ten shots were fired at the UNITA headquarters, with at least three entering the building through the windows; other shots lodged in the building exterior. Samakuva was not hurt although two bullets were imbedded in the wall close to where he had been standing. One bullet hit a local youth in the foot.

¶ 15. (SBU) Members of the police detail inside the building identified the direction from which the shots were fired and grabbing flashlights, went out across the street in search of the assailants. They found three armed men in front of/near the MPLA headquarters, which is located directly across the street from the UNITA headquarters, with guns they believed showed evidence of being recently fired. Shortly thereafter, a fourth man on motorcycle stopped in front of the UNITA headquarters and drew his weapon but was disarmed and apprehended by the police details and UNITA members. This man was identified by the Camabatela national police as a policeman who had been suspended 15 days prior to the incident for disciplinary reasons. End UNITA version of events.

¶ 16. (SBU) UNITA said that it was only able to make the details of the event public on Sunday, March 4, because those directly involved were out of satellite and telephone communication until Saturday evening. When asked why UNITA had not pressed charges, Da Costa questioned why the police would need to receive a formal complaint to investigate shots fired against any Angolan citizen. Note: Bullets were dug from the interior walls of the building although Angolan police have little capacity for forensic investigation. End note.

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But Still Actively Participating in the Government

¶ 17. (SBU) UNITA called a press conference on Tuesday, March 6, to present its version of facts to the public. Flanked by nearly all the top party insiders, including Abel Chivukuvuku, Samakuva reiterated his commitment to continue institution strengthening in Angola, especially in light of the approaching elections. This speech was similar in vehemence to his December speech in which he compared the dos Santos regime to that of former Portuguese dictator Salazar (reftel). Samakuva criticized the lack of impartiality in the judicial branch and in the electoral process. He alleged that &almost all high level government officials, with few exceptions, use the government to do business with their own private enterprises. This turns into current practice, institutionalizing corruption, while the common citizen is walking in the mud, with no potable water and without even the dream of electricity.⁸ Note: Chivukuvuku is expected to be Samakuva's main competitor for the UNITA presidency in the upcoming party elections. End note.

Angolan Police Account

¶ 18. (SBU) According to press accounts in the government-owned Jornal de Angola, the National Police division of Kwanza Norte province reported that it was investigating a report of seven shots fired by a Kalashnikov in Camabatela during a time at which the UNITA president happened to be visiting the town. The Police spokesperson confirmed that local police forces reacted quickly, going to the area where the shots were presumed to have originated. However, one of those sent to investigate the shots, sub-inspector Francisco Carioca, was attacked by UNITA provincial authorities and because of the injuries sustained in the attack was hospitalized in Ndalatando. Despite the electricity outage, Carioca was able to identify the perpetrators by name and the police have issued arrest warrants for those who attacked him. The police said it believes the shots fired were an incident of random shooting (of which there are many in Angola), and are

investigating it as such. According to the police, since UNITA did not file a complaint, it does not believe that this incident was an attempt on the life of Samakuva, but rather an incident of random gunshots and UNITA officials attempt to justify beating the sub-inspector.

¶ 9. MPLA spokesperson, Norberto dos Santos, & Kwata Kanawa,⁸ in a statement to the Press, denied that the incident represented an attempt on Samakuva's life and demanded that UNITA back up its allegations with proof during the next Bilateral Commission meeting between the government and UNITA.

Reactions from Inside and Outside Angola

¶ 10. (C) Da Costa told us that many representatives of Embassies in Luanda, leaders of the other opposition parties, politicians and officials from Africa and Europe have called personally to talk to Samakuva and see how he is doing. Da Costa said that Samakuva received no calls from any MPLA or government officials, not even from colleagues with whom he serves in the Parliament or on the Bilateral Commission. He said Samakuva was not going to let the incident change his behavior and planned to continue to meet with the public, especially as the country geared up for the elections. Da Costa said that even though many of the UNITA inner circle had experienced close calls, during the war, the incident reminded them that they could take a bullet, at any point.

Note: Samakuva attended a large non-denominational church service in honor of the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Angola on Sunday, March 11 seemingly accompanied by only one bodyguard. The crowd cheered loudly for him when he was introduced. End note.

UNITA Sees Shots as a Serious Incident

¶ 11. (C) Da Costa said UNITA saw the incident as a threat to Samakuva, in particular given the proximity to Samakuva with which several bullets had landed. While he acceded to the possibility that the shots: 1) originated with a lone individual with no connection to the government or MPLA; 2) were intended only as a sign not meant to be a threat; 3) originated within UNITA in a bid to create more chaos within in the party, he returned to the UNITA position that the government/MPLA (used interchangeably) had a hand in the incident. While presenting no evidence of government involvement, Da Costa criticized the MPLA/Government reaction to the incident as extremely weak.

¶ 12. (C) UNITA was widely quoted in the opposition press on March 10-11 characterizing this incident as another example

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of the government's intolerance⁸ and intimidation. Spokesman da Costa also used the expression intolerance to emboff, citing the February detention and arrest (later released) of eight PADEPA members for distributing pamphlets on the street and the arrest and detention of Global Witness activist Dr. Sarah Wykes as recent examples of government actions to warn off political parties or individuals from questioning its commitment to transparency and democratization.

¶ 13. (C) Comment: While investigations continue, it is likely that this will remain an unsolved incident in Angolan pre-election lore, with each side interpreting it to its best political advantage. However it is clear that UNITA has taken the incident seriously. The display of solidarity with Samakuva by those party leaders, including Chivukuvuku and others who have criticized Samakuva in the past, is UNITA's way of sending the message that when threatened by the outside, UNITA will put aside its internal disagreements and stand together as a party. End Comment.

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